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ABSTRACT

Like many other newly independent countries of the Third World, Botswana, at independence in 1966, sought strictly utilitarian uses of education to train manpower for modernization. By the mid-1970s, however, the country had assumed a more humane development ideology, promising economic equality, democracy, and social justice. The policy of "Education for Kagisano" (education for social harmony) promoted universalization of primary education, and offered nonformal education to youth and adults, bypassed by the formal system of education. The fifth National Development Plan (NDP5), 1979-85, attempted to eradicate illiteracy by the end of the plan period. Consequently, the Botswana National Literacy Program (BNLP) was launched in 1981. By 1985, BNLP was to make all of the estimated 250,000 to 300,000 illiterate adults literate in Setswana, the most widely spoken language chosen as the language of literacy for Botswana. The goal proved to be too ambitious; however, the cumulative enrollment was close to 170,000. The sixth National Development Plan (NDP6), 1985-91, has also undertaken some bold educational initiatives. It assigns a permanent role to non-formal education in the development of Botswana, and seeks to introduce and institutionalize a new educational role within the development culture, that of the "extension educator." At this point in the life of NDP6, however, its educational initiatives remain far from implementation. (Forty-six references are appended.) (MM)

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THE BOTSWANA NATIONAL LITERACY PROGRAM:

CASE MATERIALS ON POLICY AND PERFORMANCE

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THE BOTSWANA NATIONAL LITERACY PROGRAM:

CASE MATERIALS ON POLICY AND PERFORMANCE

Like many other newly independent countries of the Third World, Botswana, at Independence in 1966, sought to make strictly utilitarian uses of education to train manpower for modernization. By the mid-1970s, however, the country had come to assume a more humane development ideology, promising to its people, economic equality, democracy and social justice. The new policy of "Education for Kagisano" (education for social harmony) would attend to the universalization of primary education, and offer nonformal education to youth and adults, bypassed by the formal system of education.

The fifth National Development Plan (NDP5), 1979-85, accepted the mission to completely eradicate illiteracy from the society by the end of the plan period. Consequently, the Botswana National Literacy Program (BNLP) was launched in 1981. By 1985, BNLP was to make all of the estimated 250,000 to 300,000 illiterate adults literate in Setswana -- which as the most widely spoken language had been chosen as the language of literacy for the whole nation.

The program targets proved to be over-ambitious. By the end of the year 1985, the cumulative enrollment had been no more than 170,000, out of which as few as 40,000 to 50,000 were in post-literacy programs. In the meantime, population figures had crossed the one million mark, reaching 1,079,000 in 1985; and the absolute number of illiterates had perhaps remained the same as at the start of the program in 1981. (MOE, 1986, p.36).

The sixth National Development Plan (NDP6), 1985-91, has undertaken some rather bold educational initiatives. The Plan extends BNLP beyond the earlier deadline of 1985 until such time as illiteracy is indeed completely eradicated from the society. It assigns a permanent role to non-formal education in the development of the nation; and seeks to introduce and institutionalize a new educational role within the development culture, that of the "extension educator." In the immediate run, NDP6 expects BNLP to educate some 15 per cent of the nation's children who are being bypassed by the primary education system today. This certainly is a great new challenge for BNLP. Interestingly enough, NDP6 also dares the existing correspondence education system to become a viable alternative to secondary education for rural youth.

At this point in the life of NDP6, the bold educational initiatives remain far from effective implementation. Critics continue to doubt the genuineness of the political commitment. Needed resources have indeed not been allocated. Problems of management and administration still plague the program.

CULTURAL AND DEVELOPMENTAL CONTEXT

Botswana, formerly the British Protectorate of Bechuanaland, became independent in 1966. Botswana is a country of the size of France but a large portion of the Western and Southern part of its 582,000 square kilometers are covered by the Kalahari desert. Agriculture is possible only in the more fertile strip of soil lying North to South along the line of rail where 80 per cent of Botswana population lives. Cattle-raising

is possible in the semi-arid areas of the desert. Indeed, Botswana has more cattle in the country than people.

During the 19th century, Botswana had shared with its neighbors in the region, a history of tribal warfare and raids by the Boers from South Africa. In 1885, the chiefs of Bechuanaland requested British protection against the Boers and accepted the protectorate status. They remained under British protection until Independence in 1966. The first President Sir Seretse Khama, an English-educated and enlightened tribal chief, was revered by all and became a legend in his own life.

Botswana´s geography clearly determines the country´s present-day geopolitics. It lies on the Southern African plateau bordered by South Africa, Namibia, Zimbabwe and Zambia and is thereby deeply enmeshed in the Southern African politics. As a member of the Southern African Development Co-ordination Conference (SADCC), Botswana has to tow a fine line. That is not easy to do. Botswana is not only vulnerable to South Africa´s military machine, it is also economically vulnerable to the big ugly neighbour. Some 20 per cent of Botswana´s adult population still work in the South African mines. Botswana is the world´s fourth largest producer of diamonds but must depend upon the Anglo-American (De Beers) Company to bring the diamonds out of the earth and to market them abroad. The Anglo-American Company certainly does not provide this service cheaply for Botswana. Botswana´s other exports are copper, nickel and beef.

Some fifty percent of Botswana´s people live in the cities. The other five per cent live in the villages. They move

from villages to the lands according to seasonal patterns. Many have left, as we said earlier, to work in the South African mines. This has made Botswana's "living society" a society of female-headed homes, and of children born out of marriage.

The country did not, of course, become de-colonized the day after Independence! The Botswana governing elite are Westernized and their development ideologies and strategies are reflections of developments in the West. Dependent ralationships continue to be perpetuated. While Botswana is no longer on the list of the poorest of the poor countries and while estimated growth of GDP in real terms has averaged around 13 per cent per annum over the entire post-Independence period, the country still has to depend considerably on technical assistance from bilateral and multilateral sources (MOF&DP, 1985, p. 13).

EDUCATIONAL CONTEXT

Since BNLP has now been assigned a new role in promoting formal education by covering school children bypassed by formal schools, it is important to sketch the larger educational context of Botswana. The 1985/86 Annual Report of the Ministry of Education succinctly summarizes the progress over the twenty years of Independence, 1966-86, thus:

"In 1966 there were 251 primary schools and 9 secondary schools. There were neither Polytechnic nor University; the two Bridages existing had completed one year of training; and the adult out of school public had no provision for education whatsoever. In 1966, 136 pupils passed the Junior Certificate and 27 the Cambridge examinations. The number of degreed

graduates was under 100.... [At the time of Independence then, there were] perhaps no more than one hundred citizens who could be called upon to undertake senior positions of responsibility in the public and private sectors." (MOE, 1986, p.2).

The report considers the transformation of the educational system during the twenty years "nothing short of miraculous" as it continues: "There are now 231397 primary pupils in 558 schools. Sixty-eight secondary schools have 39584 students. Both sectors are supported by five colleges of teacher education. There are the Polytechnic, the Auto Trades Training School and the University. In 1985, 4610 received a Junior Certificate, 1701 a Cambridge Overseas School Certificate and there were some 1500 students at the University. Many thousands of out of school adults are learning basic education through a national literacy programme." (MOE, 1986, p.2). More than 12 per cent of the total national development expenditure was being spent to bring all this about. (MOE, 1986, p.36).

ADULT LITERACY PROMOTION IN BOTSWANA: A HISTORY OF POLICY DEVELOPMENT

Does literacy have a role to play in such a political, social and economic context? No hasty answers should be attempted. The obvious is not always the informed. One can easily get tricked into thinking that literacy can wait until more urgent and more important things have been be done. It may be suggested by some that political struggle for economic independence should come first. That, however, would only move the discussion one step away. How do we create among the

illiterate a sense of solidarity? How do we politicise the people without literacy? How do we make structures transparent to enable the excluded to read the world, without enabling them to read the word? How do we teach the illiterate new skills for greater productivity? Others may suggest that the tasks ahead could be handled without literacy with the new media of technology. That also, we now know, has been a vain hope. Literacy can not wait! (Bhola, 1984b; 1987; 1989).

The history of the development of policy for adult literacy promotion in Botswana can be constructed from the Government´s many pronouncements on the subject in its National Development Plans and the reports of its various special commissions, committees and government departments.

Caution is, of course, advisable. Prouncements by governments can not be taken at their face value. Governments sometimes make policy pronouncements for mere symbolic reasons with no intentions to follow up on them. Governments may accept a policy initiative as the rational choice but may then qualify it with so many "ifs" and "buts" that no action could be expected. At other times, there may be different and divergent priorities at different levels and within different sectors of the policy making culture. The paragraph on national literacy policy contributed by the Chief Education Officer responsible for nonformal education in the Ministry of Education may be treated as no more than words by the chief official in the cabinet secretariat. Heads of departments in different development departments may not even read the chapter on education.

The first National Development Plan, 1968-73

The first National Development Plan (NDP1) of the newly Independent Botswana followed a transitional plan that had sought to bridge the period of constitutional change from internal self-government to full independence; and from rudimentary planning of the colonial era to full resource planning. The planners now sought to create a rationally planned and guided economy without stiffling private initiative. The importance of the mining sector in the development of Botswana was well understood. Rural development was seen as important both for reasons of social justice and to stop migration from rural areas to the urban areas. The most over-riding concern was manpower training to be able to take control of the bureaucracy and of the economy from the departing British colonial officers. Literacy was not on the agenda during those early years (MOF&DP, 1966; 1968).

The second National Development Plan, 1970-75

The second National Development Plan (NDP2), 1970-75 was already talking of self-reliance and democratic planning. To make the involvement of the people possible, it had visualized the establishment of village development committees and of district development committees. Again, there was yet no discussion of the role of nonformal education or of adult literacy in the process of development in general, and in rural development in particular (MOF&DP, 1970).

The third National Development Plan, 1973-78

Botswana's third National Development Plan (NDP3), 1973-78, required that: "the Ministry of Education will, in

consultation with other ministries, investigate the role of literacy programmes in the development strategy and, where possible, sponsor functional literacy programmes on a local or national scale using existing institutions and organizations as the base for action" (MOF&DP, 1973, Para 7.153).

The NDP3 went on to suggest that "there is a strong a priori argument for a large-scale national functional literacy project." "The successful promotion of development, especially in the rural context, rests heavily upon the ability of people to communicate. The high illiteracy rate in Botswana makes it difficult to disseminate information and general educational materials and it hinders the transmisssion of feedback by those experiencing development. In a large country with a scattered population, the dissemination of information cannot be by word of mouth alone" (MOF&DP, 1973, Para 7.153).

However, the approach suggested later for implementation was quiet cautious. The literacy approach was to be "based on stimulating an economic and social interest in being literate and devising programmes related closely to the life-style of the participants. Furthermore, since literacy is a tool for improving the success of development programmes by improving communication abilities and by enabling people to receive economicaliy useful information, it is clear that literacy programmes should be closely integrated with other elements of a widely-based rural development programme." As can be seen, the program was to be functional not transformational, there was emphasis on individual motivations not much talk of mobilization

and, therefore, what was planned was a program, not a campaign.

The National Commission of Education, 1977

In December 1975, the then President of Botswana, Sir Seretse Khama appointed a commission on education that submitted its report fifteen months later. The National Commission came up with the concept of Kagisano (meaning social harmony or cooperative striving). Kagisano was described as the totality of the four national principles -- democracy, development, self-reliance, and unity. Two other principles added to Kagisano were social justice, and the sense of community and mutual responsibility. The report included a whole chapter on out-of-school education. It did not mention literacy, though radio listening groups were envisaged. (MOE, 1977). Literacy, again, was not included in the terms of reference of the reconvened National Commission of Education (MOE, 1979).

This National Commission of Education that reported before the end of NDP3 and before the beginnign of NDP4 recommended that literacy be given priority attention within nonformal education programs in Botswana: "A literate population is an important long-term objective if Botswana's other national objectives are to be met....Literacy should not be pursued in isolation from other development programmes as an end in itself. It is best acquired in the context of efforts to achieve greater productivity, health, or control over one's environment" (MOE, 1977, Para 7.13).

Once, again, one can see a hesitant approach to literacy promotion: one step forward, one step backward. The objective is

long-term which comes to mean a lack of urgency. In the final lines of the paragraph quoted above, we find the adoption of a "project approach" to literacy promotion, which means the professionalization of labor rather than the promotion of the peoples' interests.

The National Assembly in August 1977 approved a National Policy on Education (Government Paper No. 1, 1977; Gaborone: Republic of Botswana) which promised the consideration of new educational programs "on the basis of consultation with the people who the programmes are designed to serve. Consideration will be given to literacy programmes." The establishment of a special unit in the Ministry of Education for nonformal education was envisaged. This unit would be responsible for adult literacy programs as well.

The Government paper took note that " While the [Education] Commission indicates that non-formal education plays an important role in the general strategy, and indicates the general direction that future development should take, it does not provide a fully-fleshed policy for non-formal education. Such a policy was called for in the Third National Development Plan and the need was re-emphasized in NDP-IV. Work toward such a policy has begun and will continue ... leading to presentation of a separate White Paper on Non-Formal Education. The Non-Formal Education Sub-Committee of the RECC [Rural Extension Coordination Committee] will be principally responsible for work towards this end."

The fourth National Development Plan, 1976-81

The fourth National Development Plan (NDP4) reiterated most of the policy initiatives proposed by previous development plans and particularly the recommendations of the National Commission of Education; and foreshadowed the establishment of a Department of Non-Formal Education to complement the formal system of education (MOF&DP, 1977).

The fifth National Development Plan, 1979-85

Dr. Q.K.J. Masire, President of the Republic (who had taken over from Sir Seretse Khama on his death on July 13, 1980) set the tone in his foreword to the NDP5 as he wrote: "Finally, our commitment to planning must not just be concerned with achieving high rates of economic growth. We must ensure that the lot of all our people is improved through adopting programmes and policies which will utilise the benefits of our mineral sector for the good of the whole nation" (MOF&DP, 1980, p.ix).

The development ideology and strategy of the nation had been well articulated in NDP5. The development strategy of Botswana today is governed by the four national principles of Democracy, Development, Self-reliance and Unity. These principles are claimed to be rooted in the traditional culture of the Botswana people; and, when applied in practice, will achieve Kagisano, that is, social harmony. These four national principles are concretized in four national planning objectives: Rapid economic growth, Social justice, Economic independence, and Sustained development. The two main foci of national development action are employment creation and rural development.

The bulk of development resources were to come from Botswana's mining sector. The government was "to achieve rapid and large returns from intensive capital investment in mining [and] to re-invest those returns so as to improve the living standards of those who do not benefit directly from mining sector expansion" (MOF&DP, 1980).

The Educational Agenda of NDP5

The fifth National Development Plan (NDP5), spanning the years 1979-85 marked a watershed in the history of development and for the role of literacy for development in the twenty-five year history of Independence in Botswana. A new development ideology had emerged and a new educational perspective had come about -- Education for Kagisano.

As has been indicated earlier, the new education policy marked a shift in ideology from "manpower training" to "human resource development." Every child in Botswana was to be given a good basic education in a primary school provided by the government. Some of these children will go to secondary and vocational schools, and some, later on, to the university to acquire abilities and skills needed in Botswana. But, most importantly, primary education was seen as a minimum basic need by planners.

But what about those who had been bypassed by formal education; and were unlikely to avail of formal education now or in the immediate future? The educational needs of farmers, and workers, in rural and in urban areas, had to be met today. If they could not come to school, the school had to go to them.

In 1978, the Government of Botswana established the Department of Nonformal Education within the Ministry of Education in Gaborone with the purpose of providing basic education to those lacking in formal education.

It is not within the scope of this paper to present a full accounting of Botswana's achievements in formal education, or even in the area of nonformal education. What is most interesting is how development planners in Botswana made the "literacy and development" connection. There are basically two parts to the justification of literacy for development in Botswana. A useful radio network to cover the wide expanses of Botswana, with its small and scattered habitations, was going to be impossible in the near future. For the same reason, face-to-face delivery of extension services was going to be an unattainable hope. Print communication, therefore, had to be central to the delivery of education and extension in Botswana.

The educational agenda for NDP5 was theoretically congruent with the overall development objectives. The educational objectives were stated as follows:

-- to increase educational opportunities, and to reduce inequalities of educational opportunities, so far as resources permit;

-- to contribute to the balanced economic development of Botswana by seeking to satisfy manpower requirements for all sectors, emphasising particularly the needs of rural development and employment generation;

-- to promote personal qualities such as respect for national ideals, self-reliance and concern for other people,

and to encourage full development of individual talents; and -- to extend the role of schools and colleges in the local community, and vice-versa (MOF&DP, 1980, p. 99).

Focus on Nonformal Education and the Initiation of the Botswana National Literacy Program

A new and separate Department of Non-Formal Education (DNFE) had been established within the Ministry of Education of the Government of Botswana in 1978. NDP5 had great expectations from the new department and required that it play an important role in meeting the educational needs of rural communities and particularly of those deprived of all other forms of education. DNFE was asked to meet the special needs of women; to provide skills training and opportunities for social and civic studies; provide commercial education for small-scale enterprises; provide leadership and materials for an environmental sanitation campaign; and promote a library service in rural areas.

Its most important initiative, however, was the inauguration of BNLP. BNLP would teach literacy in Setswana to all the 250,000 to 300,000 adults estimated to be illiterate. Beginning with an intake of 15,000 in the experimental year of 1980, BNLP would enroll 50,000 adults every year thereafter, eradicating illiteracy completely from the country by the end of 1985. Each cohort of adult learners would receive 12 months of supervised instruction and then be given a supply of self-tuition materials for independent study during the ensuing 12 months. To deliver the program nation-wide 18 District Adult Education

Officers (DAEO's) would be appointed, one in each district and others to work at the HQ in Gaborone.

Results of NDP5 Initiatives

The Botswana development strategy , unfortunately, did not work as it was supposed to. The diamond mines of Botswana did not generate all the resources needed for the achievement of development objectives. As President Dr. Q.K.J. Masire of Botswana had put it in his introduction to the fifth National Development Plan, Botswana has to depend on others, in this case South Africa, to bring out its wealth from the bowels of the earth; and prices for Botswana minerals, as also of other Third World Nations, are determined by forces outside their control. Dependency perpetuates dependency. Vulnerability feeds on itself.

Some two-thirds of Botswana, as we indicated, is covered by the Kalahari desert, one of the harshest environments for human habitation. The absolute size of the population is small. The 1981 national census enumerated 941,027 people. Eighty-three per cent of them lived in the rural areas, and the rest in the urban areas. There were slightly more females than males; and 43.3 per cent of the total population was below the age of 15.

Employment generation, one of the two development themes of NDP5, has definite limits in an economy which empolys no more than 15 per cent of the total labor force of some 428,000 -- and growing at the rate of 3 per cent annually-- in the formal sector. Indeed, three-fifth of its labor force, numbering 250,000 men and women, are dependent for their livlihood mainly

on low-productivity work in agriculture and in the informal economy. They are the poorest among the poor (MOF&DP, 1982).

Educational performance during NDP5 was also a mixture of the impressive and the dismal. In nonformal education things did not quite pick up. The draught had particularly bad effects on BNLP.

The sixth National Development Plan, 1985-91

Introducing the sixth National Development Plan (NDP6), 1985-91, the President of the Republic, Dr. Q.K.J. Masire surveyed with satisfaction the twenty years of Independence which had seen the per capita income rise by over five times of what it was in 1966. He noted, however, that the country had reached a plateau in terms of mineral revenue growth. There would be less to spread around, as the growth rate of GDP would be reduced to 4.8 per cent. Yet, the promised that his government will continue to "disseminate the mineral revenues towards rural development and employment creation, thus ensuring that all Batswana can contribute to, and share in, a long-term and viable development process" (MOF&DP, 1985, p. xi).

Under this larger national strategy for the distribution of wealth, the four development planning objectives of NDP5 -- rapid economic growth, social justice, economic independence, and sustained development -- as well as the two special themes of employment creation and rural development were to continue unchanged under the NDP6.

The Educational Agenda of NDP6

There were subtle shifts in the educational agenda from NDP5 to NDP6. The objectives of education under NDP6 were as follows:

-- To prepare Batswana for useful and productive lives, with emphasis on training to meet manpower needs of the economy. Rural development and employment generation will be given special attention.

-- To increase educational opportunities for all age groups and reduce inequalities of educational opportunity within the limits of available resources.

-- To promote coordination between various subsectors of the education sector with the ultimate aim of providing continuous access from primary to post primary education and training by using both the formal and the non-formal systems.

-- To strengthen cooperation between the school and the community by encouraging increased participation of the community in management of schools. (This last objective printed in bold type in the original document).

In comparing the educational agenda of NDP5 and NDP6, one finds that emphasis on manpower training is back. Expansion of educational facilities as well as of access to education continues to be given attention within the limits of available resources. Particularly noteworthy is the fact that both formal and nonformal education sectors have been yolked to the tasks of educating the nation to full development objectives.

Nonformal Education: Continuity with Greater Challenges

The new role assigned to nonformal education is so significant that it is important to quote in full the tasks given to the non-formal education department:

> -- The Department will continue to attempt to meet the learning needs of communities in rural and remote areas. In doing this, the Department will be guided by the National Literacy Committee and the Rural Extension Coordinating Committee, and will continue to cooperate with the Department of Tirelo Setshaba [National Service Scheme for Students] as well as other agencies at national, district and village levels. Local authorities will have increased influence in planning and implementation of non-formal programmes.
>
> -- The Department will expand its non-formal activities beyond reading, writing and numeracy. The needs of rural communities, in terms of skills, required for income generating activities, will form the basis for this expansion.
>
> -- The Department will strive to make correspondence education a viable alternative to secondary education by, for example, providing a wider choice of, especially practical, subjects.
>
> -- The Department will continue to train staff at all levels in developing skills relevant and appropriate to specific job needs.
>
> -- The Department will continue to use radio broadcasts to

support the activities of its various units (MOF&DP, 1985, pp.158-59).

BNLP Under the Current Plan

The NDP6 document repeats earlier government declarations to the effect that "a literate population is essential for the successful implementation of the country's ambitious development programme." Therefore, the government is still committed to the objective of eradicating illiteracy from Botswana. Says the Plan document: "Following the experiences of the first years of the programme and recommendations made in the internal evaluation of 1983, a new strategy for the long-term eradication of illiteracy has been worked out." BNLP will continue as a development project until the end of the NDP6.

Now to the new challenge assigned to the BNLP:

> An important aspect of the new strategy is that it includes special measures to cater for children of school age living in communities with no primary schools. Thus, in cooperation with other relevant departments in the Ministry of Education, special materials for school age children will be developed. In addition, a clear policy will be worked out on the relationship between non-formal education and primary education. It is important that young people who graduate from the National Literacy Programme can enter the primary school system at appropriate levels. The National Literacy Programme will play a vital role in achieving universal primary education, in that children can get their basic education in reading, writing and arithematic in

literacy groups, if they live in communities that do not have access to primary education. It is expected that Tirelo Setshaba participants will assist in this aspect of the National Literacy Programme (MOF&DP, 1985, pp. 158-159).

The plan pays due attention to the institutional aspects of the new inititive. The program would not operate in one and the same geographical area for more than four years -- this period parallels the four years of primary education. This period is considered sufficient for the establishment of a literacy and post-literacy program. Skill training will be provided to learners in cooperation with relevant extension departments. After projects and project groups have been formed they will be transferred to the field staff of the appropriate development ministry. Both these are significant details.

The DAEO's envisaged under the nonformal education program will be actually employed and deployed in the districts. There will be a decentralization of responsibility to the DAEO's. The number of Literacy Assistants (LA's) working at the cluster levels within the districts will be maintained at 150. However, in the immediate future 60 posts out of these 150 will be converted into the new posts of "extension educators" who will be given an appropriate scheme of service. Literacy Group Leaders (LGL's) will continue to be recruited from rural communities on a voluntary basis to teach literacy groups. Finally, in cooperation with the National Library Service, rural libraries will be established and book boxes circulated among libraries in the network.

A PROFILE OF PERFORMANCE
OF THE BOTSWANA NATIONAL LITERACY PROGRAM

The multiple political and economic assumptions on which NDP6 was based have not all been sustained and all the objectives laid down for the plan may not be fully achieved at the end of the plan period in 1991. The same is true of the overall educational agenda. In the following section, we will focus on the performance of BNLP since its inception until the middle of 1987. The profile is developed on the basis of several program documents issued by the DNFE (BEC, 1977; Beyer, 1987; DNFE, 1979; Klaus, 1987) and a series of evaluations of BNLP, both internal and external (Bhola, 1984a, 1985; Gaborone, Mutanyatta & Youngman, 1987). The presentation is organized around the various sub-systems and elements of a fully-functioning literacy program of national scope (Bhola, 1984b).

Literacy before BNLP

A brief set of remarks may be made in regard to literacy promotion work in Botswana before the launching of BNLP in 1981 under NDP5 and continued under NDP6 (BEC, 1977). Literacy work in recent times was made possible by the work done in pre-Independence Botswana by the Churches. They committed local languages to writing and published Christian literature in Setswana. Indeed, the missionaries in the area had the distinction of being poineers in having produced and printed the first translation of the Bible in an African language before the close of the nineteenth century. While this work made literacy

possible, they had made few organized attempts to teach literacy to adults (Sandilands, 1971).

The Colonial Department of Education, in the 1930s, decided to assist Churches and some communities in setting up "adult schools" to teach literacy, agriculture and health. These schools surely did some good, but faded away at the beginning of the Second World War. During the war period, a special literacy program is known to have been drawn up for Botswana members of the African Poineer Corps. It was able to reach a very small number of people (Wass, Undated).

At Independence when the Community Development Department was established at the Center, organization of literacy classes was one of its first tasks. Staff appointed for community development was sent overseas for training; workshops for writing materials for new literates were organized; and literacy classes were opened in some villages. Inadequacy of methods and materials accentuated the problem of dropouts from literacy classes. As trained staff left the department, the literacy program was dropped.

During the 1970s a number of governmental and non-governmental agencies have undertaken sporadic programs. The literacy program conducted by the Botswana Christian Council (BCC) in Selebi-Pikwe was long sustained. However, it used a South African literacy primer which was pedagogically sound but culturally and politically not quite congenial (BEC, 1977).

In 1972, the Division of Extra-Mural Services (DEMS) of the University of Botswana conducted a program using a mixture of Unesco and Freirean methods. The program that started with 15

groups in Francistown was never able to expand for sheer lack of resources. In 1973, a Unesco consultant, Kenneth Brooks recommended a functional literacy project to eradicate illiteracy in 10 years. He also suggested that extension staff of ministries be used as field organizers for literacy work all across the country (Brooks, 1972). The consultant's report was rejected by the government as too ambitious and too demanding of the extension agencies who had other priorities to take care of.

During 1973-1980, interest in literacy can be seen to have been diverted into other forms of nonformal education which are independent of mass literacy. Radio was the first straw that development communicators tried to catch at. The mass radio learning group (RLG) campaigns were quite successful in their own terms. One campaign dealing with the topic of the national development plan was able to establish 1500 RLG's. A second campaign dealing with the government's land reform proposals worked with as many as 4000 RLG's. These campaigns were found to be reasonably successful in overcoming the barrier of illiteracy through the use of radio and literate group leaders. But it was clear that nonformal education without literacy will have problems of motivation and of unresponsive audiences (Bude, 1980; Guerri, 1980). Theatre was also put to work in development communication with some minor successes (Kidd & Martin, 1977; Youngman, 1978)).

Two pilot projects in adult literacy preceded the Botswana National Literacy Program (BNLP) that was launched in 1981, after the experimental year of 1980. Both of these pilot projects were

conducted by the Botswana Extension College, since merged in the Department of Nonformal Education: the first project was conducted during August-November, 1977 and the second during July-December, 1978.

The Overall Time Frame and Targets of BNLP

The year 1980 was to be an experimental year when plans would be made, organizational arrangements designed and put in place, personnel would be trained and literacy materials would be produced and field tested. The total number of illiterates, estimated to be between 250,000 to 300,000, would be served for the total eradication of illiteracy by 1985/86. This did not happen. By the end of 1986, only 178,319 adults had been enrolled in the program. Under NDP6, the program has been extended until such time that all illiteracy is eradicated from the country.

Objectives of the Literacy Program

The objectives of the Botswana National Literacy Program were rooted in the assumption that "a literate population is a necessity for the successful implementation of the country's far-reaching development programme, and that there will never be enough field staff available for person-to-person developmant assistance and advice.... Thus, all goverment development activities in field work require reading abilities in their target group in order to give solid backing to all their advice by leaving booklets, information hand-outs, posters and brochures for rural inhabitants that they can refer to when the extension worker is not present."

The objectives are to create opportunities for meeting "the learning needs of communities in rural and remote areas, for adults who never had a chance to go to school or who have relapsed into illiteracy, and for children of school age who are living in villages without schools. The objective of serving the educational needs of children in remote areas who have no school to go should be of interest. The sixth National Development Plan, 1985-91, also seeks to obtain the cooperation of other line ministries to make available relevant continuing basic education for the out-of-school population. This means that literacy is not seen as the sole preserve of the Department of Nonformal Education in the Ministry of Education, but is conceptualized as a collaborative effort among all the departments and ministries dealing with education and extension.

The Level of Political Commitment

As already indicated, the essential role of literacy in development is well understood by development planners and is codified in the nation's development plans. In the practical politics of day to day, however, political commitment falters. The top leadership in the country has not made literacy a part of their political discourse. Indeed, they may be avoiding to be identified with a program whose effects are intangible, whose successes are seldom spectacular and whose failures are always easy to point out.

The amount of funding for the program provided by the Govermment can be seen as one indicator of its political determination. During the 1981/82 budget cycle, the Government

of Botswana may have spent no more than 5 to 6 per cent of the total budget of 811,735 Pula (One Pula is about one dollar). During 1983/84, the Govermment contribution was about 25 per cent out of a total outlay of 1,589,758 Pula. Thus, three-fourth of the budget for the literacy program came from outside sources such as the Swedish International Development Authority (SIDA); the Agency for Technical Cooperation of the Federal Republic of Germany (GTZ); UNICEF; and others. Understandably, this dependence on foreign funds pawns the program to outsiders.

Institutionalization of the Literacy Initiative.

The institutionalization of the program within the govermental structure is, on the other hand, a very hopeful sign. There is a National Literacy Committee that acts as the policy making and planning organ at the inter-ministerial level. However, BNLC is more of a committee of the Ministry rather than of the Government as a whole. It is almost a contraband and has not been taken seriously.

Botswana is one of the few Third World countries with a full-fledged department of nonformal education and a separate section for literacy coordination. Here again, the organization of the department has been less than effective and its staffing always inadequate in both numbers and professional training.

Eighteen District Adult Education Officers (DAEO´s) have been appointed one in each of the districts and major areas of the country to implement the literacy program. There are 150 Literacy Assistants (LA´s) in the program. Each DAEO has a number of these (LA´s), one for each of the clusters into

which districts have been divided for the purpose. Each LA supervises a number of Literacy Group Leaders (LGL's) who are volunteer literacy teachers and are the work-horses of BNLP. It is important to note that the government has created a new nonformal education role within the development culture, that of the extension educator and 60 of these 150 LA's will be appointed to these new posts according to a scheme of service under consideration of the government. During 1985/86, 23 literacy assistants successfully completed the Certificate in Adult Education course of the University of Botswana and were upgraded as Extension Educators. (MOE, 1986, p. 20).

The number of LGL's within the program may be anywhere between 1400 to 1800. They are typically ill-educated, under-trained and are unmotivated considering that they receive a very small honorarium -- one Pula for each literacy class session conducted -- and do not seem to be going anywhere with the program. More recently, the allowance of one Pula was raised to 2 Pula.

With the general paucity of educational infrastructures in the country, and with little backup support available, most of the technical work related to BNLP has to be done by the DAEO with or without outside consultants. Problems of curriculum development, production of materials, training of personnel at the various levels of the program, and evaluation and monitoring have all been handled by the DNFE with and through its own institutional resources.

Social Mobilization for the Program.

To ensure that BNLP does not become a program dominated by the bureaucracy, there have been genuine efforts to promote mass participation. The existing structure of District Extension Teams (DET´s) and Village Extension Teams (VET´s) is used to involve people in making decisions about their learning needs and in their learning groups. This is not to say that hopes for people´s participation have been fully realized. DAEO´s spend too much time at their desks in the district headquarters. LA´s, most of them women, do not like to leave their offices to go into the bush. When they do go to the villages, their visits are short and in haste. There is no time to spend with community leaders or with learners to mobilize them for participation in the literacy program.

The radio man in the Media Section of the DNFE produces a magaziune type program that may incidentally be helping in the learner mobilization. However, with a few hours of radio programming a week, there is little that he can contribute to the systematic mobilization of learners in behalf of the program.

Curriculum for Literacy Learners.

BNLP follows the Unesco concept of functional literacy. This requires that the teaching of the 3-R´s and of functional skills (in agriculture, cattle-raising, or another chosen activity) be taught in complete integration with each other. This is easier said than done. The LGL´s, most of them, primary school leavers, are unable to teach economic skills to learners at a functional level. The hope that the program would be able

to use the extension workers in the field to teach functional skills to adults in literacy classes have not been realized. Thus, the literacy primers have become the core of the curriculum. A monthly broadsheet sent to all literacy classes both extends and diversifies the curriculum. Follow up books and other supplementary reading materials have been produced to enrich the curriculum for literacy learners.

Two important things have happended to BNLP under NDP6. It is now realized that the DNFE staff can not provide skill training to their learners and that income generating activities must be handled within the programs of appropriate development ministries. This means that the DNFE/BNLP staff will from now on be responsible for developing learners groups and preparing them for undertaking economic projects. But once the groups are poised to begin their work they will be handed over to the appropriate ministry.

Another important change in BNLP is its task to teach those 15 per cent of children in rural and remote areas who have been bypassed by the system of formal education and are unlikely to be served by it in the near future. This will mean the development of a curricular stream to be offered to children within BNLP. Also, with the expectations to provide multiple entry points between the formal and nonformal education systems, there will be the need to develop primary education curricula for adults which are suited to the interests of adults and which offer set of skills and competencies equivalent to those taught in primary schools.

Training of Literacy Personnel.

Training of literacy personnel for BNLP is one of its relatively strong points. LGL's receive an initial training of 14 days and then get monthly refresher courses. There are also annual workshops for selected LGL's. LA's begin with an initial training of three weeks duration and then continue to receive in-service training of different duration and scope. The DAEO's on BNLP may be one of the best trained cadre of literacy officers anywhere in Africa.

The Teaching-learning Process.

Classes are supposed to be held during September-December of each year, that is, during the lax period of the agricultural cycle. It has been discovered, however, that classes last all year. Classes are conducted in all sorts of places: schools, community halls, Kgotlas, under the trees and, in some cases, in shelters constructed by learners.

Each group is supposed to have beween 5-16 learners. If group membership falls below five, learners are distributed to other groups. If the number of learners in a group goes beyond 16, the group is divided into two parts. There are more women in classes than men. Young children are also often present.

Classes are supposed to meet five times a week for 75 minutes at each session. Groups should decide when to meet. It takes 12 months (some 400 hours of instruction) for a learner to become fully literate.

No attempt is made to force everyone in the class to keep the same pace and be at the same lesson on a particular day.

There are thus many leaner groups within the same one literacy class. There is lot of peer teaching. There is not much teaching of functional skills, however. Field workers from other departments of extension are not available to teach and LGL´s are not competent to teach such materials.

Residential literacy classes may be tried in areas where people live too far apart from each other and where it would be impossible to meet as a group. Recently, the Luthern Church of Botswana organized a residential literacy course for 12 people at the "Sehitwa School of Adult Education." Participants became literate, on the average, in a period of six week, with four hours of instruction each day. In addition to reading and writing, they were taught some gardening, cooking, construction of pit laterines, bee-keeping, personal hygiene, as well as some history, civics and geography.

Coverage of the Program.

As indicated earlier, estimates for illiterates in Botswana in 1981 had varied from 250,000 to 300,000 in a population of about a million. It is surmised that with the population increase during the 1980s, the number of illiterates may still be the same. The table on next page presents the year by year coverage of the program.

Year	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986
Participants	7976	23630	18779	27935 (Cumulative total: 178,319)	36068	30577	33354
Literacy Groups	699	1779	NA	2050	2942	1901	[2000-2500]
Literacy Group Leaders	NA	1427	1188	1559	1633	1480	[1400-1800]
Literacy Assistants	28	105	104	135	133	134	150

Notes: 1980 was the experimental year.
Number of learners expected to be enrolled annually are 33,000.

The Annual Report of BNLP, 1986 shows learners by primer level as follows:

	Primer I	Primer II	Primer III	Primer IV	Primer V	New Literates	Total
Total Number	13064	4922	2262	1953	2326	1681	26208
%	49.8	18.7	8.6	7.5	8.9	6.4	99.9

A recent evaluation of BNLP (Gaborone, Mutanyatta, & Youngman, 1987) tested a sample of 845 participants and produced the following interesting data: 65.1 per cent were female; 37.2 per cent were between the ages 21-30; 58.7 per cent were single;

37.3 per cent had had no formal schooling and hence BNLP for them was an alternative education program; 81.0 per cent passed the literacy test successfully -- this is remarkable considering that the pass level for adults was set at 40 per cent as contrasted with 33 per cent for children in formal schools. The group had covered farmers, vendors, and the unemployed.

Post Literacy Programs.

The challenges of post-literacy programming in Botswana are not any different from anywhere else in the world. Those who graduate from literacy classes must continue to read so that they do not lose the literacy skills so painfully acquired and that they put their literacy skills to use as they participate in the social, economic and political institutions of their societies. This requires production of a variety of reading materials for the new literate to read and assistance in linking the new literate with institutions of production and participation in the community.

It has been estimated that while there are about 250,000 illiterates in Botswana, there are an almost equal number of literates and semi-literates who need materials to read. Materials need to be produced for them that are both functional and interesting.

But there is a much greater challenge. The present "literacy groups" who are already at an advanced stage must be transformed into new "project groups" directed towards functional and productive activities. Some of these project groups may function with the guidance and support of DNFE, but most should

be adopted by the various departments and agencies of development extension. The new plan seeks to formalize this transfer of responsibility but it is not clear whether there will be success.

Evaluations of the Botswana National Literacy Program.

BNLP has paid due attention to the evaluation of its methods, materials and results. An internally conducted mid-term evaluation of BNLP had been anticipated in a meeting of the National Literacy Committee as early as 1981. Such an evaluation was conducted during 1983 (Bhola, 1984a). While some outside assistance was obtained, it was basically an internal evaluation handled by the officers at the DNFE headquarters in Gaborone and by the DAEO's in the districts. Again, while several "technical" objections have been raised against this evaluation, the exercise was a great success when judged with pragmatic criteria. The evaluation exercise succeeded in establishing the rudiments of a Management Information System within BNLP. It provided some useful data that was used in making several important program decisions. At another level, the evaluation exercise has made the functionaries of BNLP conscious of the need for program information. Finally, it ended up being an exercise in mobilization of learners and communities. Participation in the program shot up from 18,000 to 28,800."

Since the internal evaluation of 1983 which was used in the development of the initiatives in NDP6, there has been one comprehensive external evaluation of BNLP in 1987 (Gaborone, Mutanyatta & Youngman, 1987). Consultants from GTZ evaluated planning, management and communication patterns within the DNFE

and with other developmental institutions both horizontally and vertically and in the process provided useful evaluative information (Beyer, 1987; Klaus, 1987).

From the Learners' Perspectives

As the learners themselves saw it, the program neither prepares them for employment nor for entry into the formal education system. Drought and seasonal changes, they pointed out, often made it difficult for them to participate (Gaborone, Mutanyatta & Youngman, 1987).

AN ANALYSIS OF POLICY AND PERFORMANCE

It is time to look back on the policy intentions and actual performance and see how the dialectic between policy and performance worked out in the real world.

Botswana's policies on development do seek social justice. The role envisaged for education, and partricularly for nonformal education, in promoting development is theoretically sound generally as well as in the context of Botswana. The role assigned to literacy in the transformation of society is an act of vision, courage and practical sense.

But policies need political commitments to have a chance for being implemented. "Literacy for Development" plans of Botswana are an excellent example of technical rationality, duly codified in planning documents. But technical rationality is not the same thing as political reality; and codification in planning documents is not the same thing as implementation of planning actions. Political commitment to literacy may be less than

total. The belief in the role of literacy in development has indeed not permeated within the whole system of planning and action at its various levels.

At the institutional level, most functionaries acquire the mentality of a wage-earner who is doing a job for money. Without inspiration from the highest leadership, those working on the program do not see the possibilities of social change it can wrought in the lives of people. They do not see themselves as culture-makers which they actually are. At worst, these functionaries spend all their time and efforts in capturing the resources of the program for their own selfish use.

Though the profile of performance of BNLP is no matter for joy and self-satisfaction, it provides us no reason for being cynical either. The only sentiments that should be allowed to emerge are realism and renewed commitment.

Too often literacy programs are much more severely evaluated than other programs of development education and extension. It so happens that all programs of development education -- agriculture, health education, nutrition, family planning, childcare, cooperative, and of course, formal education -- have low efficiency and low effectiveness. Literacy is no exception. The challenge is to improve efficiency and effectiveness and not to reallocate resources to another program which later on is discovered to be equally problematic.

In comparison to other levels of education, BNLP was a basement bargain as the following figures should indicate (MOE, 1986 Appendix V, p. 36):

Amount spent per pupil/student per annum 1985-86

	Pula (One Pula equalled Pounds 0.33 in 1985)
Literacy participant	25
Primary school pupil	160
Secondary school pupil	733
Teacher trainee	1455
Polytechnic / Auto Trades Training School trainee	3160
University student	8079

It is important to remember that BNLP is the first sustained program of this scale in the history of the country. It has been responsible for putting literacy permanently on the development agenda of the nation. It has institutionalized a new educational role and has established a structure for the delivery of education and information to the remotest parts of the country. It has taken developmental information in print to the middle of the Kalahari!

What are the Tasks Ahead for Literacy Workers in Botswana

The particular role assigned to nonformal education to serve the educational needs of children under 15 who cannot go to school should be acceptable as long as it is not used by the government to forever forget their obligations to these difficult to reach children bypassed by the primary school system. But there are tasks to be accomplished if results are to be achieved.

The DNFE must quickly develop special curricula for children out of school and they should develop special primary education courses for youth and adults who may want to enter the formal school. LA´s and LGL´s must be trained to handle these new duties.

An equally massive and systematic interface needs to be established between literacy and development extenstion in the country. The division of labor as planned between DNFE and extension agencies in regard to income generating activities is a good beginning. But these interfaces must be operationalized and made functional in the real world.

In this context, the pressure from donors on the Government of Botswana to accept more and more of the financial commitment for the conduct of such an important program is well meaning. Indeed, the government by accepting this commitment may save the program from pressures from donors all of which are not good for the health of the program.

It is important that the government develops policies for investments in rural areas and job creation in rural areas so that the new literates have the possibilities to draw more out of their environments and thereby resist pressures to migrate to the urban areas (MOF&DP, 1982, pp. 448-449)

An earlier initiative by RECC suggesting training all nonformal and extension education personnel in one setting to help them see their interdependence and to share a core of communication skills should be pursued and implemented as soon as possible.

The focus on reorganization, management and training

issues at the level of the delivery of the program is also good, if organization and management do not become a substitute for political commitment, staff morale and allocation of resources. Staff training and conditions of service should also be taken care of, again, not forgetting that the program must serve the people and not only the interests of the program's functionaries.

Botswana must stay the course. Sooner than later it will be a fully literate society and able to serve the interests of all its peoples.

Lessons Beyond Botswana

For policy makers interested in the role of adult literacy in Third World development, BNLP will provide some instructive lessons:

1. From a larger historical perspective, BNLP provides one more demonstration of the inevitability of literacy. Slowly but surely, two steps forward and one step backward, we are moving towards the destiny of the species -- universalization of literacy to match the universalization of speech that has preceded in the history of our evolution. Literacy may not be in our genes but it has come to be an important partner in the gene-culture co-evolution of the species. Neither the Bushman in the Kalahari, nor the Sherpas of Nepal, nor the Bedouins of the African desert are outside this process.

2. In an international perspective, BNLP shows the influence of Unesco in its policies of literacy promotion. There is a clear though subtle Unesco connection in the history of literacy in Botswana (as indeed there is in nextdoor Malawi). Brooks

suggestion for a Unesco project was not accepted but a later Unesco official, Edwin Townsend-Coles played a most important role in developing the literacy policies of Botswana.

3. The Botswana case is also a story to be watched by all those interested in the role of literacy in development; and of how literacy has come to acquire a central position in development policy from its position of being unnecessary -- at least being peripheral. Botswana elite tried to do development without literacy during 1966-77. By 1978, they had given a central position to adult literacy in development process and wanted to eradicate illiteracy through a massive nation-wide program in five years during the fifth National Development Plan, 1979-85. In the sixth National Development Plan, the development elite have taken a further step in the integration of literacy in development. The attack on illiteracy will be sustained and the nonformal education program will be viewed as an ongoing program with ever-changing objectives. Most significantly, BNLP will acquire the new objective of teaching 15 per cent of the young children, among whom more male than female, who can not go to school and are unlikely to go because of the new demands of social roles imposed on them, because of their parents' movement to the lands, and because there are no schools in the area. While at one level this could be seen as a retreat from the equity concerns included in the universalization of primary education, it can also be seen as the integration of nonformal education and literacy within the total system of education.

4. At a more concrete pragmatic level, BNLP reminds us all,

once again, of the need for political commitment for successful literacy promotion. This commitment needs to be sustained and continuously verbalized. It must not remain the government's best kept secret. The leadership at the highest level must come out openly and often in favour of the literacy program. The most concrete expression of commitment is allocation of resources needed for institutionalization and implementation of the program. BNLP has been run mostly on outside sources. While it has worked so far, the government must put its own money in literacy promotion to show commitment as well as to buy freedom from constrains imposed by some of the donors.

5. The role of literacy in development has been now widely accepted at a theoretical level and within the policy making cultures. For literacy to play a role in development at the practical level, however, development ministries such as agriculture, health, labor, and cooperatives must accept "ownership" of the literacy program. They must coordinate with BNLP from policy through planning, implementation, training and evaluation; and they must plan their own programs on "the assumption of literacy" among their clients. This is a lesson to be learned world-wide in all Third World countries.

6. BNLP also indicates the difficulties of implementation of literacy programs. These problems are indeed no different from those in other sectors of development and include problems of management, supervision, logistics, under-training, low morale and lack of motivation among client groups. In literacy programs these problems are a bit more severe since literacy programs are often new and are far from being institutionalized. On the other

hand, their consequences are not quick, obvious or separatable from other extension inputs. Literacy workers all over the world must learn this lesson. While evaluation of literacy programs is important, literacy programs as innovations must be protected from premature evaluations and from inflation of expectations. While evaluations must always be somewhat political, the politics should be understood so that evaluators do not play into the hands of people who have already made up their minds about a program and are looking for someone to say what they want to hear.

7. Finally, literacy remains the "nector in the sieve" if literacy is not used by those who have worked so hard to acquire it. The understanding has finally emerged that literate environments are created in the very process of doing literacy work. But that does not make the task of creating literacy environments any simpler. Printed materials must be written and produced. Libraries and reading rooms must be established. More importantly, the political, economic and social structures must be renewed in ways that they create opportunities for the use of literacy as they respond to the needs of the people.

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